

## **Transport Organisation in a Great City: The Case of London**

### **Recommendations, and take up of them since 1974**

The table below summarises the recommendations made in *Transport Organisation in a Great City*, published in 1974. The right hand column describes briefly the changes that have occurred since that time in relation to each recommendation.

As can be seen, most of the recommended changes to the system have come to pass, in whole or in part. It is not known to what extent the book itself influenced the changes.

It should be remembered that although London now has a fairly integrated and well-coordinated mechanism for planning and managing all aspects of transport, the intervening years since 1974 saw a period of complete breakdown and fragmentation of London Government generally, following the vengeful action by Margaret Thatcher to abolish the Greater London Council. The book was highly critical of many policies of the former Greater London Council in the early 1970s, but it stoutly defended the need for a strong London-wide government. In 2000 a new London government structure was set up which not only was London-wide, but included more robust powers for all modes of transport, and integration with land use planning within the Greater London boundary. Apart from the creation of Transport for London and the elected Greater London Authority, the year 2000 was also an important milestone in London's governance for the institution of a directly elected Mayor - the first in the UK.

Changes in government structure may occur partly in response to political or practical issues of governance itself. The main purpose, however, should be to enable improvements to be made on the ground. The improvement of transport organisation in London, as described in the table below, has without doubt led to dramatic improvements in the capital's transport system. In the early 1970s, when the research for the book was carried out, the bus system was in decline, the rail system was underinvested and unreliable, little attention was given to resolving the environmental impact of traffic, nothing was being done to protect or improve public spaces, there was little provision for the mobility of those with a disability, parking was chaotic, and the needs of pedestrians and cyclists were almost totally neglected.

Seen in this context, London's transport system in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century has much to be admired. It is almost inconceivable that the improvements that have occurred in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century could have taken place had the system of governance remained as it was in the 1970s. Still less could dramatic improvements have been a product of the unfortunate period from 1984 to 2000 when London was without a proper strategic transport and planning authority.

Summary of recommendation	Relevant changes since 1974
1. A new integrated transport grant structure is needed for London.	<i>Mostly achieved</i> The formerly fragmented transport grant system has largely been replaced by central funding through Transport for London, enabling much better integration and prioritisation of spending between areas and modes.
2. Trunk roads within London should be the responsibility of the Greater London administration	<i>Achieved</i> Former Trunk (Government) roads within the M25 are now the responsibility of Transport for London
3. National Rail suburban services should become the responsibility of the Greater London administration	<i>Partly achieved, and active discussion of full transfer</i> Some National Rail services have now been transformed in a new TfL network branded "The Overground". Both of London's mayors have pressed the Government to allow TfL to take responsibility for London's suburban rail services. The first steps to integration with the TfL networks has been taken with the extension of the Oyster smart-card ticketing system to much of the London mainline network.
4. Traffic and parking functions of the Police should be transferred to a new civil "traffic corps" under the control of the Greater London Council.	<i>Objectives mostly achieved</i> Traffic and parking enforcement is no longer a major drain on Police resources. The use of traffic enforcement officers (traffic wardens) and the de-criminalisation of parking offences (1991) greatly improved the administration, and even the popularity, of the system of control. The system is not as envisaged, however, in that responsibilities are split between Police enforcement on the TfL main road network (Red Routes) and civil enforcement administered by the London boroughs on the rest of the road network.
5. Organisational structures to facilitate integrated transport and land use planning	<i>Mostly achieved at London level, less so at national level</i> The London government system now facilitates transport planning that takes account of interaction between different modes; environmental impacts; alternative approaches; land use implications; public consultation. Integration at the national level has, however, been patchy and changeable.
6. A new voice for the interests of pedestrians and cyclists	<i>Partly achieved</i> Departmental structures within Transport for London and the London Boroughs are better suited to representing pedestrian and cycling interests than they were in 1974, due in no small part to the emergence of influential campaign groups, and political response to changing public opinion.
7. Political mechanism to resolve conflicts between traffic and environment at the local level	<i>Not achieved, but perhaps no longer required</i> Conflict between the former GLC and the boroughs frequently arose from the former promoting interests of traffic, and the latter defending the local environment. While such conflict still occurs, both levels have probably developed greater willingness to negotiate balanced solutions. An "arbitration committee" at the political level could still, however, be valuable to resolve the more difficult issues.
8. Public involvement should be an integral part of transport planning	<i>Mostly achieved</i> The balance has shifted in favour of public involvement and consultation, with statutory requirements built into the system.
9. Coordinating machinery should be simplified	<i>Achieved</i> The creation of an integrated strategic transport authority (TfL) has substantially reduced the need for coordinating bodies